



China Lifts Ban on Trade of Tiger Bones and Rhino Horns

China has lifted a 25-year old ban on the scientific and **medical use of tiger bones and rhinoceros horn**.

- According to conservationists, this lifting of ban would have devastating consequences globally for the endangered species.
- Tiger bone and rhino horns are used in **Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)** and are used to treat insomnia and gout.

Background

- Tiger parts were removed from the official TCM pharmacopoeia, a list regulated by China's health ministry, when the country first banned the trade of tiger parts in 1993.
- In 2010, the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, an international non-profit established in Beijing, urged its members to stop using tiger parts or parts from other endangered wildlife.
- China, under **President Xi Jinping, has sought to portray itself as more environment-friendly**, passing stricter protections over wildlife and natural resources.
- **In 2016, China banned the sale of ivory** which was believed to be a cure for everything from cancer to sore throats in order to reduce poaching of elephants.
- However, the more **stringent regulations have come into conflict with Chinese medicine diplomacy**, an effort to use TCM to expand the **country's soft power** globally.
- Further, **higher living standards have increased Chinese demand for animal parts**, valued for their supposed life-extending powers. A recent fervour for ejiao, a "blood-enriching" gelatin made from animal hides, has spurred scrutiny over donkeys, mainly from Africa, slaughtered annually to meet Chinese demand.

India's Concern

- **Authorities and wildlife conservationists in Assam are concerned** about the detrimental effect on the **state's one-horned** rhino after China has lifted a 25-year-old ban on use and trade of rhino horn and tiger bone- products.
- According to the latest count, **Kaziranga National Park in Assam** has 2,413 one-horned rhinos and in 2018, five rhinos fell to poachers. **Rhino horns poached from here will turn up in China's markets as 'legal' products**. This is an indirect way to open up markets for poached products.
- This might give a boost to rhino poachers and traffickers of horns, who might attempt a spurt in their activities with the hope of laundering the products as legally acceptable in China.
- Multiple researches and study papers have established that **rhino horns poached from Assam land up in China through Myanmar**. A report by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** in 2017 noted that **Myanmar's Shan state was a notorious backdoor wildlife trafficking hub** through which rhino horns are taken to China.
- The **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)**, a leading NGO in wildlife conservation and endangered species, **has urged China to maintain the ban**, adding that the trade will have devastating consequences globally.
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) clearly states that tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives.

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

- WWF is an **international non-governmental organization** founded in 1961, working in the field of wilderness preservation, and the reduction of human impact on the environment.
- Its Headquarters is in **Gland, Switzerland**.
- Its mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
- The **Living Planet Report** published every two years by WWF is based on a Living Planet Index and ecological footprint calculation.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

- CITES is an **international agreement between governments**.
- It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of **IUCN** (The World Conservation Union).
- Its aim is to ensure that **international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival**.
- Although CITES is **legally binding** on the Parties but it **does not take the place of national laws**. Rather it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.
- The species covered by CITES are listed in **three Appendices**, according to the degree of protection they need.
- **Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction**. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
- **Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction**, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.
- **Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country**, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.
- A specimen of a CITES-listed species may be imported into or exported (or re-exported) from a State party to the Convention only if the appropriate document has been obtained and presented for clearance at the port of entry or exit.